

Off to new adventures by Xonic90

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Summary: A few months after their latest enemy from the other world was defeated successfully it is now time for our favorite group of teenagers to move on with their lives. Let's see what adventures are waiting for them in a world where nothing is like it seems. (Mostly Millevan Fluff, Family and Friendship)

1. No means no

Hello everyone and welcome on board for this little fluffy ride! Before we start I have to warn you that English is not my main language. So please let me know if you find any mistakes. I hope you enjoy this and I can't wait for your opinion :)

Chapter 1: no means no

He tried his best but in the end, he failed miserably. What was he even thinking? Keeping a thirteen-year-old locked up in an old cabin in the middle of the wood for a whole year. It took her less then onehundredandfifty days to break his resolves with her sad big Bambi eyes and her soft voice. It was impossible to not love this girl with her innocent and curious view of this world that hadn't been very good to her this far.

That is how Chief Hopper found himself in a local shopping mall holding a worn red shopping basket filled to the brim with pens and paper and folders and all the knickknack one seemed to need these days when attending middle school. Back in his days, they had nothing more but a few sheets and a pencil.

From one of his shoulders hung a huge bright pink backpack. Pink was El's favorite color. He suspected that it might have to do with her past spend mainly in plain rooms colored in white and blue. The bright girly color seemed to calm her and lighten her mood. Although he didn't really care for girl's stuff he would never forget the warm feeling in his chest on the day he surprised his new daughter with her new room which consisted of walls colored in light pink, a desk and a dresser made of bright wood and a comfy bed with a new floral comforter. All thankfully chosen by Joyce Bowers and Nancy Wheeler.

Hopper didn't earn that much as a chief of a small town but he would spend everything he has to see that brown eyes widened in disbelieve and that happy smile on that lovely face of his girl every day.

He had to shake his head to find back to the presence. Thoughts like that were what got him in this current situation. Not even a dad for a

whole year and already he was agreeing to bend his rules. He really wanted to keep El for himself for a whole year or better until she would be thirty but he also understood that she was curious and eager to catch up to the life that was forcefully taken from her for the last thirteen years. Therefore he allowed her to return to school at the end of this summer together with her friends.

Speaking of which his gaze wandered along the aisle where his daughter was currently browsing through a selection of glittery pencil cases while the Wheeler boy stood beside her holding a similar shopping basket and looking at the girl like she was about to tell him the secret for immortality.

He knew his name was Mike... mainly because most of his day was filled with talks about what Mike had to say and what Mike thought... but somehow he felt more comfortable to refer to him as 'the Wheeler' boy or 'that guy'. He knew he was a good kid. After his little breakdown, he even had the guts to confront Hopper about it and apologize for his behavior and Hopper couldn't deny that he respected him for that move, given that he usually tried his best to intimidate him into the floor.

Although he would never admit it out loud, he was actually quite fond of the boy for what he had done for his little girl during the last two years. But El was just so young and innocent. Even after what she had been through she didn't know anything about teenage boys and heartache and if the boy would ever break her heart Hopper just knew that he couldn't take it.

On the other hand, everyone with eyes could see that the thing between those two was so much more than what any usual thirteen years old could even understand. As he witnessed the way Mike was treating her... a girl who could easily break the neck of a grown man... like a precious doll made of the finest china, he knew that he would not hurt her on purpose.

What he didn't calculate was that his decision to let this romance grew unhindered involved having the boy around him in every waking minute. Obviously, his parents didn't care much about his whereabouts because Mike was with them whenever he could and now that the two would go to school together they won't even have

to separate for that.

With a sigh, Hopper cleared his throat to get the attention of the two teens. "Don't you think that will be enough for now Jane? We can still come back for more once school has started if you notice something is missing."

Jane put the pencil case she had chosen carefully into the basket Mike was holding and the two shared a soft smile. Then she turned to face her father and gave him the same smile accompanied with a nod. She still wasn't much of a talker and although Joyce had given him the advice to urge her into using actual words he wanted her to just do what she was comfortable with.

Hopper gestured for them to follow him to the checkout and as soon as he turned his back to them he could hear soft giggling. The chief rolled his eyes. He was clearly about to get a headache.

"Back to school Hopper?" Petty the cashier asked him with a grin as she was checking out their goods. The woman was a Hawkins native for her whole life and had worked in the little supermarket for longer than Hopper cared to remember. "It's for my daughter who is going to attend the local school this summer. Jane says hi to Mrs. Perkin." Hopper grumbled and the girl gave the older woman a soft greeting before she took a shy step behind Mike.

"Uhhh is that the girl you... ähm... your daughter?" Petty asked him excitedly while she watched El with awe. By now everyone in town knew the story of Hopper having an illegitimate child he took in after her mother died. Given his reputation with women, no one doubted that. He was just hoping that the story wouldn't reach his Ex-wife as he wouldn't want her to think he had cheated on her. Not after what they had been through together.

The man just nodded for an answer and hurriedly shoved a few dollar bills into her direction to get them out of here. Petty looked like she wanted to say more but she knew the Chief well enough to see that he wasn't in the mood for a chat so she just sends the shy little girl a reassuring smile and wished the group a good day as they left the store.

"Those people are such a nosy bunch. I would be glad if they could just care about their own business." He growled between clenched teeth as they were walking to his car what earned him a concerned look from his daughter. "Nice lady." She objected in a reassuring tone and he had to smile at her. "Yeah, you are right El. Forgive me I'm just a grumpy old man." He pulled a face at her what made her laugh.

They were just about to finish packing the trunk when a crackling electric sound disturbed them. Quickly Mike shrugged his backpack off and fished one of those huge old walkie-talkies from it.

"Paladin Mike please come. This is Will the wise. Over." Hopper rolled his eyes again what earned him another delighted giggle from El. "This is Mike. What do you want?" Mike answered with a slightly unnerved tone.

"Just checking on your attitude." The voice of another boy answered and they could hear laughing in the background. Mike groaned. "We are all invited to Max house for the afternoon and we wanted to know if you will come too." A third voice said which Hopper recognized as Lukas. At the mentioning of the red-haired girl, Hopper noticed a slight frown forming on the usual angelic face beside him. He wondered what that might mean.

"Oh come on lover boy. You can see her all day once school has started." Lukas whined. The frown on El's face deepened. He guessed that she was torn between keeping Mike for herself and not wanting to keep him from his friends. "Ask her if she wants to come you, idiots." The voice of a girl sounded from the background.

Now Mike looked up at his girlfriend to search her face for a decision. After a second El broke the contact to look at Hopper instead.

Be strong. Don't give in this time. There was that look again. "Okay fine you can go. Might be good to have at least one girl around you. I get you there and I will pick you up at nine. Not a minute later." A grin broke her face and Mike looked relieved too as he let his friends know that they were on their way.

Maybe Hopper should use his free time to train his willpower in an

animal shelter with practicing to say no to newborn puppies.

2. Girls and Boys

Thank you so much for all the nice comments! You guys are great. Please let me know what you think about this one.

Chapter 2: Girls and Boys

It was the hair. El remembered the day when she came out of the bathroom wearing that wig with the long blonde hair and she could still feel the impressed looks of the boys on her and how it made the skin on her cheeks grew warmer. She liked that feeling. But it was nothing more than a costume. Her real hair was short and although she was about to grow it out the curly strands did what they wanted and resisted each of her tries to gain some control over them.

Max's hair was like liquid fire. It was long and reached to the middle of her back but what made it really impressive was the bright red color that fluttered in the autumn sun like embers. With hair like that, her casual style and her cool attitude the other girl seemed almost effortlessly taking up all the attention in the room. Sometimes she had to repeat herself three times whenever they were in the same room because the boys, especially Dustin and Lukas, seemed to totally forget that she was there.

And that was exactly why El didn't like her. At the moment Dustin and Lukas tried to trump each other in their attempts to impress the new girl with their meager skills in skating mainly by acting like total idiots. Max was standing beside them on the abandoned street behind her parent's house, laughing about their clumsy tries and giving advice while Mike, Will, and El were currently sitting on the sidewalk watching the trio.

"Hey, Mike. Don't you want to try it?" Max called and waved for Mike to come to her. Instantly El felt her body stiffen beside him. Mike looked up from where he was lazily playing with a few stones. "No thank you. I don't want to break my neck." He answered dismissively. And El felt a little wave of relieving float her system. Max just laughed. "Oh come on don't be a baby." She teased him and El's neck started to tingle. All she would have to do was turn her head a little and she could... Suddenly she felt Will's gaze on her and as she

turned her head to look at him she noticed the intense stare the small boy was giving her. As their eyes met he shook his head slightly and El let her hands drop in defeat.

Somehow his experiences with the other world seemed to have left an imprint on Will. Mike told her about the changes they had noticed in their friend. He always used to be a shy and quiet boy but it had become worse. Sometimes he was just sitting around staring into nowhere like if he could still see behind the curtain into another world. Will denied it but something was off with him and apparently, he knows also developed an intuition for El's powers.

Mike, who didn't seem to have noticed the exchange, gave an irritated moan. "Fine. If we can finally go into playing on the Atari-like you had promised us." He said as he lifted himself off the ground. Instantly El's hand shot forward in a panic to wrap her fingers around his. Mike looked back at her in concern. "No Mike. Dangerous." She pleaded with him with her big eyes as he carefully graced her knuckles with his thumb to console her. "Don't worry El. I've done this before. I will be fine." With that, he pulled his hand away and walked over to Max, Dustin, and Lukas where they handed him a skateboard and a helmet.

"You shouldn't use your powers on your friends." Will whispered beside her and El gave him an irritated look in return. "Max is not my friend." She answered harshly but wanted to slap her hands above her mouth in the same instant. She didn't want Will to think bad about her but the boy just chuckled. "I understand but I don't think you have to worry. She is actually quite alright and she also has a difficult time with her family and everything. You just have to get to know each other a little better."

El gave him a reassuring nod but in her mind, she still doubted that she would ever befriend the other girl.

Will and El turned their attention back to the street ahead of them where Mike was about to put the board down in front of him and stepped onto the little wooden plank with one foot. Then he carefully lifted the other and gave himself a little push. El could feel her heartbeat in her ear as the strange thing beneath his feet started to role forwards slightly.

"Not bad Wheeler. You are a natural." Max praised him but her tone sounded more like she was mocking him. Lukas and Dustin watched their friend with matching gravel expressions.

This time Mike pushed a little harder and the board started to move faster. The bored expression moved from his face and El could see that he was starting to enjoy himself. At the next try, he bends his knees a little deeper and moved his feet so that the board made a turn.

Everyone watched him with surprise given the unexpected success of the boy that usually acted like his arms and legs were a bit too long for his body. Mike skated up and down the street and did a few turns while his friends cheered him on. After a while, Mike stopped the board and turned for Eleven. "El come over here! You have to try this too."

Unsure she looked at Will who gave her a reassuring nod and a little smile. Nervously she stood up and tried to pat some dirt on the shorts she was wearing. As she passed Max on her way to Mike the girl gave her a friendly look and a wide and honest smile. She couldn't make out even the slightest tint of malice on her face and that made her feel a little bit guilty about her behavior towards the red head.

As she reached Mike he held out his hand to her which she took care as he guided her to stand in front of him. "Okay now you just step on the board and I do the rest." He instructed and since El trusted him with every root of her stubborn hair she did as he told her. Although Mike was holding it still with his foot the board was moving slightly beneath her and she needed a second to take her balance.

She almost fell when they started to move but Mike was quick to put his arms around her waist and pull her closer to him. An unknown fluttering feeling spread from her belly and she didn't know if it was because of the strange sensation of skating or because of the feeling of being held.

"You like it?" Mike asked her with a whisper in her ear. His warm breath next to her face made it hard to focus on keeping her balance. El didn't dare to turn around so she just nodded hoping that he would feel it as the back of her head was pressed against his chest. Mike

chuckled softly before he gave to board another push that made them a little faster and then another one until they were rolling down the street almost as fast as on his bike.

A giggle left her mouth as El dared to close her eyes as she enjoyed the soft late summer wind cooling her face and the warm feeling of Mike's body behind her as well as his light smell of washing powder. She almost felt like she could fly when suddenly the board hit a stone and made an unsuspected jump. Mike lost his balance and as he fell he pulled El down with him since he was still holding onto her. She gave a surprised shriek but it was too late to do anything to catch the fall. In the last instance, Mike managed to spin them around a little so that his body would be between her and the solid asphalt street. As El felt the soft skin on her left knee split with a sharp pain Mike hit the floor full force with a loud and nasty slap and an unhealthy cracking sound.

She didn't even notice the blood dripping down her leg as she immediately crawled over to Mike who was laying on his back holding his right arm with a pained expression on his face.

"Oh my god are you guys hurt?" An agitated voice screamed from the other end of the street as their friends came running in their direction. El didn't even hear them as her whole system was floated with panic.

"Mike man. Can you move your arm?" Lukas asked as he reached them but as soon as his hand touched the arm of his friend Mike let out a loud yelp that made everyone jump backward. "I'll go get my mom," Max said before she went running back to the house without waiting for an answer.

"El... are...mpf....are you hurt?" Mike asked between clenched teeth while his eyes roamed her body while he was checking for any injuries. Eleven didn't even notice that he had spoken to her until Will carefully touched her leg to check her knee.

"I'm fine." She dismissed him with a stern expression. "Don't worry about me." She stated and then out of pure instinct she crawled over to him and carefully lifted his head to rest it on her lap. She knew him well enough by now to notice that he was trying to play down

his state but he had to close his eyes regularly to deal with the pain in his arm.

Not a second later Max came back with her mother and it was quickly decided to get Mike to the hospital. Of course, everyone wanted to go with him so they all squeezed themselves into Mrs. Mayfield's car as they rushed to the hospital. El refused to leave his side as they brought him into the examination room and ordered his friends to wait outside. Mike's face turned slightly red as the nurse started to cut his shirt off him so he wouldn't need to move his arm but El didn't even seem to notice as she was still staring at his arm with burning intensity.

An hour later Hopper rushed into the hospital like a tornado. Everyone jumped out of his way on pure instinct because he looked like a maniac. As he reached the second floor he was greeted by a group of familiar kids hanging around a waiting room being uncharacteristically quiet. Joyce was already there sitting beside her son and greeting him with a little nod as she noticed his arrival. Then she signed to the back of the waiting room where he could make out his daughter hunched into a little ball.

She had her knees pulled up beneath her chin and her arms wrapped around them. One of her knees was split open and some dried blood and dirt blemished her light skin. She wasn't crying but the panicked expression on her face gave him a chill right through his bones.

"El! Baby, what happened? Are you alright?" he asked as he rushed to her side and wrapped her in a big hug. First, it felt like he was hugging a statue but then she slowly relaxed and wrapped her arms around him in return.

"Mike is hurt." She whispered in his ear and her voice broke. "The kids were playing with a skateboard and Mike and El had a little accident. She is alright but he apparently broke his arm as he tried to stop her fall. His parents are with him right now." Joyce let him know and Hopper nodded absently.

"I hurt Mike," El whispered again and he felt wetness on his neck as she started crying into his embrace. Hopper didn't know what to say so he just wrapped his arms around her a little tighter and softly

started to rock her.

3. Wounded Soldier

Chapter 3: Wounded Solider

Hopper didn't hold a high opinion on Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler. He knew them since high school but they weren't very close back then. He was aware that Joyce and Karen hold some loose kind of friendship with each other given the close friendship of their sons and now the blooming relationship between Nancy and Jonathan. He knew they were the poster example of a bored couple living their boring suburban life and playing happy little family while they secretly hated each other and most of the time wished to be with someone else. Still, he couldn't understand how a parent wouldn't notice what was going on with their kids even as they were involved in some apocalyptic drama and almost faced death.

Now Mrs. Wheeler was acting like a caring mother worried about her son's health but Hopper was quite sure she didn't even have an idea of where he was the whole day. They told the waiting group that Mikes' arm was broken but he wouldn't need surgery. Still, he had to wear a cast for the next four weeks and wasn't allowed to ride a bike or go swimming. The kids groaned in disbelieve since that would totally cut short on their plans for the summer.

"Can I see him?" A soft voice asked from the back of the room. El had moved from her place and was watching Mrs. Wheeler with clear distress in her eyes while she was nervously wringing her hands. Mikes mother mustered her for a second and Hopper felt the urge to shove El behind him but then she gave the girl a soft smile and said: "sure dear." El gave her the smallest hint of a smile before she neared the room with uncertain steps like it was a lion about to attack her.

Now that she was holding the handle she was almost shacking with nervousness. Of course, she wanted to see Mike but she was also scared he might be mad at her for what had happened to him. His summer vacation was ruined now. Finally, she took a deep breath and knocked carefully.

The room he lay in was small and mostly white. Mike was lying in a bed made of light grey plastic and the hospital gown he was wearing

gave Eleven a slight nauseous feeling. Even his skin seemed lighter than usual. The only thing colorful in this room was the huge pink cast that covered his right arm from his fingertips to his elbow. As she entered he tried his best to give her a reassuring smile.

"Hey, how are you? Is your leg alright?" he asked her and El couldn't believe his obvious concern for her when he was the one that was seriously hurt while she had nothing more than a scratch. She nodded as she came to a stop a few feet away from his bed still wringing her hands nervously. Tears started to prickle in the back of her eyes.

Mike seemed to sense her distress because he opened his healthy arm and signed for her to come closer. With a sob, the girl moved forward and flung herself into his side burying her face in his chest as hot tears she couldn't hold back any longer started to wet his gown.

He put his arm around her and whispered soothing words into her ear as he slightly rocked her just like Hopper had done a few minutes before. "Shhh... don't you worry? I'm alright. It is not so bad. A few more weeks and we could try bungee jumping." The strict look she gave him in response made him chuckle lightly as he moved the arm with the cast to wipe her tears away with his fingertips.

"You are hurt, Mike. I hurt you." She whispered in a tearful voice. Mike was shocked: "What? N...No it wasn't your fault! It was an accident and if anything it was my fault because you warned me that I could get hurt and I didn't listen." He hugged her again and pressed a small kiss on her forehead. Her tears seemed to stop after a while and El felt herself calm down and relax in the safe feeling of being so close to Mike. The boy felt a bitter taste in his mouth as he was jet again confronted with El's unhealthy ability to take the blame for everything that happened to them. He promised himself to talk to the others about that as soon as possible but now he just wanted to hold her close and enjoy the feeling to be wrapped in her comforting warmth and sweet scent.

A few seconds later their peaceful moment was disturbed by their friends who entered the room without knocking. As on instinct, El tried to push up into a sitting position as she knew how shy Mike usually reacted with physical contact around his friends but this time

he tightened his hold on her. Thankfully his friends seemed too shocked to tease him.

"Hey man. How are you feeling?" Lukas asked him as he came to a stop next to the bed. Mike gave him a brave smile. "I'm alright. They say my arm will heal in the next few weeks and I don't need any surgery." The boy nodded but still looked a little bit abashed as he didn't seem to know what else he could say. El snuggled her face a little bit closer to Mike's chest.

"Who knew you were such a daredevil Wheeler," Max interjected and all of the boy's chuckled. El started to feel the cold feeling rise inside her again but the soft stroke of Mike's thumb on her shoulder kept her calm.

"Here I was thinking that joining a group of nerds will keep me from doing dangerous things to impress a girl." Even Will chirped in now and everyone laughed again beside Mike and El.

"Alright, kids. The doctor said we can take Mike home now. He has to rest but you can visit him tomorrow." Mrs. Wheeler exclaimed cheerfully. The friends said their goodbyes to Mike and promised to come and visit him tomorrow before they left the room. As it was her turn to go El sat up carefully and Mike gave her shoulder a last reassuring squeeze before she jumped off the bed.

"Bye Mike." She whispered as she was on the door and he waved at her while his mother tried to get him into a big sweatshirt that would cover his bare torso for the right home.

Hopper was leaning against a wall opposite of the room. El knew that she had scared him with her previous outbreak so she tried her best to give him a small smile.

"Don't worry kid. He is going to be alright. Don't think even being run over by a truck would keep him from seeing you." Her dad muttered under his breath and El gave him a little playful push for that comment. Together they left the hospital and El was asleep in the car before they even left the parking lot.

4. Take Care

Hello my dear readers! It makes me soooo happy that so many of you liked what we have here so far. I hope you will be on board for the rest of the ride :)

Chapter 4: Take care

As predicted Hoppers live got even worse after that because now he had to drive El to the Wheelers every day before work and pick her up later. Granted it was partly his own fault because he wouldn't allow her to ride there by bike or use the bus on her own so he didn't exactly have a choice. He knew that if he wouldn't allow her to go she would anyway. Although he had to admit that deep down in his grumpy soul he found the compassion in which she dotted over the insured boy almost endearing.

Mike couldn't agree more. At first, he tried to convince El that his arm wasn't that bad mostly because he wanted her to stop feeling guilty about the accident. But after a while, he started to like all the attention she was giving him. As soon as the chief dropped her off she was all over him. Keeping him company, fluffing his pillow, once she even brought him a chicken soup because it was mentioned in her favorite TV-show that this was a usual dish if someone was ill. Mike just didn't have the heart to tell her that a broken arm wasn't a cold so he kept his mouth shut and enjoyed her care and attention.

By far the best part for him was her sudden constant need to touch him. Whenever she was at his side she was holding his uninjured hand or gently stroking some of his unruly hair from his face. The thought alone of the intense and slightly concerned look she used to give him these days made him shiver.

Unfortunately, his other friends had come up with a plan to keep Mike entertained for the rest of the summer with activities he could participate in with his cast. Mike equally loved and hated them for that because although they did mean well this led to El and him not having even one minute to themselves.

Currently, the whole gang was lounging in his basement while they

took turns in playing darts. A choice Lucas, who had brought the game, quickly regretted because Max beaded their asses like hell and Mike was the only one with a good excuse for that.

Although the air was crackling with tension whenever Max and El had to be in the same room the two girls had undeniably a lot in common. Besides their gender, they were both ways more athletic and adventurous than the rest of their group. In fact, Mike thought that if someday they would start to talk with each other they could be very close friends.

Granted Mike wasn't really nice to Max when they first met but he was at a bad place at this time and desperately wanted to hold on onto the old days when they were just four boys hanging out and playing D&D in his basement. And also he was kind of known for his moody attitude. El, on the other hand, possessed a sweet and pure nature and a common trust to all new people in her life. A behavior that was extraordinary given her past. Max seemed to be the only exception to this rule. Whenever the redhead was around El acted like the other girl was a constant annoyance to her. To his huge dismay, Mike wasn't able to figure out a reason for her uncharacteristic behavior.

His mind went back to a conversation they had a few days ago when he finally worked up the nerve to plainly ask her about what was going on. Instantly the loving expression vanished from her face and the look she gave him instead was an odd mixture of mad, wary but also slightly embarrassed. The girl who could be painfully honest sometimes was now searching for words. When his mother unintentionally saved her by calling them for lunch before she had given him an answer and El almost bolted from the room Mike decided to drop the subject. Still, he was dying to figure out her secret.

"Oh come on Max. That is so not fair." Lucas whined when his red-haired love interest hit the bullseye again winning yet another round of the game. "Well maybe shoving around a little plastic figure on a board game isn't enough practice for your arm muscles." She teased him with a meaningful wink. Lucas' face was flushed with red as the usually snappy boy closed and opened his mouth in search of a fitting comeback. His reaction seemed to amuse Max even more.

"Hey, El. Do you wanna try it?" Max asked the other girl out of the blue and like on command the boys fell silent. This must be the first time one of them even acknowledged the other since Max unfortunately tried to greet El back in Wills house.

Mike's gaze followed the hand Max held outstretched to the girl beside him offering her the darts with a wide grin. El's face was totally unmoved. She just stared at the darts as if they were snakes about to attack her. He didn't know why but suddenly he gave her a soft push with his elbow that led to her stumbling slightly forward into Max direction. She turned to give him an unsure expression that he answered with a reassuring smile and a nod.

As El moved her own hand to hesitantly take the darts from Max all the boys seemed to hold their breaths. Not even Dustin had anything to say. El whispered an almost inaudible thank you that earned her an even wider grin from Max and a soft look from Mike. Baby steps.

The tension was broken as soon as the girl with the short curly hair stepped closer to the line they had drawn with duct tape prior to their game. Instantly Dustin, Lucas, and Will tried to explain the rules of the game to her... all at the same time. El let out one of her soft and tingling laughs that made Mike smile. He noticed that Max, who had taken a step back from the scene was watching him and as their looks crossed he gave her an appreciative nod. He knew the red-head well enough by now to know that she can be as stubborn as a mule. This little olive branch was a great gesture coming from her.

Her first try was a miss. He could see the slight wrinkle of her forehead beneath the mop of dark locks as she tried to figure out how to throw the darts. The second try was a little bit better but she still missed the bullseye by far. Still, her friends cheered for her and urged her to try again. Mike could see that it bothered her. He was fascinated to find out that the girl with the usually shy and friendly demeanor was apparently quite competitive.

After her third try, she surprised him again as she turned around, fixated Max and just demanded in her usual blunt way "Explain please". Max laughed but not in a cruel way as she went to collect the darts from the board. Then she came back to stand next to El and showed her how to throw the tiny arrow. El watched her with

fascination and as Max handed her the darts back her next try hit the middle. A little bit to the side but still. Everyone cheered for her and as Max hold her hand up El high-fived her without hesitation. As she came to stand next to Mike he couldn't stop himself to pull her in for a quick hug.

"Oh, great thank you, Max. Yet another girl in this group to proof our nerdiness." Lucas groaned exaggerated while he took the darts from El for his turn. His reaction earned him heartfelt laughs from everyone as they continued with their game.

When Steve picked up Max, Dustin and Lucas and everyone started to say their goodbyes the awkward tension between the girls was suddenly back. After Max hugged Will and Mike like usual and El did the same to Dustin and Lucas it was now their turn to say goodbye.

"Well... it was nice to talk to you today." Max finally broke the awkward silence and El answered with a nod and a shy smile. As Steve called for them and Max was about to leave El suddenly shot her hand forward. The red-haired girl looked at it for a moment in confusion before she finally raised her own hand to shake El's. Both girls smiled at each other and then Max left.

Not really a warm hug of sisterhood Mike thought to himself but a good start nonetheless. As the door closed behind them El turned to look at him with the hesitant look of a child who wasn't sure if it did right. Mike gave her a warm smile and took the hand she had just offered their friend in truce into his.

5. Feelings

Chapter 5: Feelings

Shortly after the rest of their friends left, Will was picked up by Jonathan what left Mike and El alone in the basement. Finally. As they waited for the chief to come get his daughter they decided to just hang out on the couch and watch some TV. Mike flipped through the channels aimlessly as El came to sit beside him. Instantly she leaned into him and placed her head on his shoulder. The two teens sat in blissful silence just enjoying being close to each other and since the others weren't around to make fun of him he even allowed himself to hold her hand.

Honestly, he didn't know why the light-hearted mocking of their friends bothered him so much. He was more than proud of having a pretty and powerful girl like El by his side but he was still a fifteen-year-old boy and so he couldn't help the little tickle of awkwardness creeping up at him whenever they made kissing noises around them. Thankfully El didn't seem to be bothered at all by that. After all, he was the first to kiss her or even hold her hand and therefore she didn't seem to understand their friend's strange reaction to it.

"I was mean to Max." El suddenly whispered and pulled Mike from his thoughts. Her brusque confession forced Mike's thoughts to a stop as he placed the TV-control away to turn and look at her. His first instinct was to mollify her but friends don't lie and he had to admit that she was a little bit rude to Max in the past so he decided to just bluntly ask her "Why?".

El took a deep breath as she moved away from his shoulder to sit up. She was focusing her hands in her lap when she softly answered: "I came to the school. Before the gate. Wanted to see you and couldn't wait until Hoppers 'soon'. I saw you with her." She made a short pause at that and Mike could see tears clouding her eyes. On instinct, he reached over and took one of her hands into his.

"I... I was very angry. I thought you would be sad just like me. I thought you had replaced me. So I pulled her from her stupid skateboard." As she said the last words her voice broke a little and

she started sobbing. Mikes' heart dropped at the sight. He lifted his healthy arm to place it carefully behind her shoulders as he pulled her to his side. Without hesitation, she buried her face in the soft fabric of his shirt and cried into his skin.

Mike didn't know what to say. He understood totally how El felt. He himself had accused Max of trying to steal El's place in their group. Now he knew that this was dumb of course. He was just desperate and bitter over the loss of his... his special someone and he didn't see how lonely and frightened Max was beneath her cool exterior. She wasn't trying to take anyone's place. She just didn't want to be alone.

Finally, El's breathing evened a little and Mike took the chance to gently grasp her face and guide her upwards to look at him. "I hope you know that this is totally nonsense El. I could and would never replace you with anybody. Not even if Princess Leia would show up at our doorstep bagging me to take her in." His stupid joke made her smile and his heart felt a little bit lighter at the beautiful sight.

"I think you should give Max a chance. She did a lot to prove herself over the last few weeks. She risked her life, broke with her family and I think she at least deserves our gratitude and friendship for that. Maybe if you explain to her how you felt she will forgive you and then we can stop tiptoeing around you two like elephants in a porcelain shop."

Now she was full out giggling and the air around them cleared almost visible. Mike leaned forward and as El noticed what he was about to do she closed her eyes and opened her lips slightly. Just as she could almost feel the soft press of his warm lips on hers the door to the basement opened and Mike flew away from her as if she had burned him.

"Kids. Hopper is here to pick Jane up." The light singsong voice of Mrs. Wheeler sounded down to them before they could hear the sound of her heels moving away from the basement door again without waiting for an answer. As El looked at him she could see the slight red tint on Mikes' face and couldn't help but find it utterly endearing. Without a second thought, she leaned forward and finally pressed her lips to his for a chaste kiss. The touch had painted a wide goofy smile on both of their faces that even Hopper's leery gaze

wasn't able to remove.

In the end, it took her almost all summer to muster up the bravery to clear the air. The last opportunity to get this out of the way before they would have to spend every day together in school presented itself on the last Friday evening in freedom. Mike finally got his cast off the day before and the party had agreed to celebrate their last few days in freedom with a few hours in the arcades crowned with a nice dinner of hot and greasy pizza.

As always the boys were totally drawn into the blinking machines within seconds after they entered the stuffy hall. Although she tried to find an interest in all the things her friends liked to spend their free time with, she just didn't get the appeal of the arcade. The place was usually loud and crowded and the blinking lights sometimes gave her a headache. Therefore nobody seemed to be surprised as El offered to get them all something to drink. What shocked them was as she asked Max to join her.

As the girls left Lukas threw a wary look at Mike. "Shouldn't we go with them? Do you think she is going to murder her?" The dark haired boy rolled his eyes as he answered with an offended look: "El would never hurt any of us on purpose and you know that Lukas. I think she just wants to clear the air with Max." "And if she wanted to kill her there would be nothing we could do about that anyway besides helping her to hide the body," Dustin added followed by a furious laugh about his own bad joke.

At the same time, El and Max reached the vending machine that was placed in a quiet corner of the Arcade. Unfortunately, the telekinetic girl still hadn't figured out how to approach the subject. Max sensed her nervous behavior but she promised herself to keep her mouth shut before something heedless fell out of it that might destroy the fragile trust between them.

As the second can of coke rolled out of the automat El suddenly turned around to her startling Max with the unexpected move. Eleven gave her a wary look. Was Max scared of her? Her heart fell a little at the thought.

"I'm sorry Max. I didn't want to be rude to you." She blurted out and

the redhead just stared at her with wide eyes. "Then why were you?" she answered but immediately wished she hadn't. El didn't seem to be offended by her direct answer just a little bit more embarrassed. "I like Mike. Not like a brother." She explained and Max had to snicker about that "Yeah. That is obvious." A soft smile appeared on El's face after her comment. "I saw you two in school. Having fun and laughing while I was so sad. I got mad. I thought you took my place and... my Mike." The last thing was only a whisper and Max was suddenly aware of the seriousness this conversation held for the other girl. Without a thought, she reached forward and placed her hand on El's shoulder.

"El. Even though I didn't know you back then I would have never tried to take Mike from you. He didn't talk about what happened much but I could still see how much he loved you and I would never take that away from you." El seemed to search her face for a second and Max hold her intense gaze. Finally, the smaller girl seemed to be happy with what she had found and offered Max one of her bright smiles.

On instinct, Max leaned forward and enveloped the other girl in their first real hug and both of them felt blissful relieve flood their systems upon the touch. "You should never have to worry about me taking anything from you. I go by the motto 'Sisters before Misters'". Max joked and El gave her a curious look. "Does that mean we are sisters now?" She asked hopefully and Max laughed out loud. "Well we could start off with friends at first but sure why not. I would love to have a sister with superpowers." And with that, both girls burst into a relieving fit of giggles.

6. A new start

Chapter 6: a new start

"Okay listen. You go to the main office and ask for your schedule. They will lead you to your first class and then you will stick with your friends who will hopefully guide you around. If something happens. If you feel like someone isn't right. You call me. Immediately. I will pick you at five in the exact same spot." El rolled her eyes but nodded.

The deep lines in Hoppers concerned face seemed to get a little bit deeper as he started to chew on his already bloody bottom lip again. Eleven couldn't understand his concern. They waited for a whole year. It was highly unlikely that the government would choose exactly this day to come and take her while she was surrounded by hundreds of witnesses.

Hopper nodded too and with a deep breath, he pulled her into him for a hug. El tried to give him her best reassuring smile as she left his car. She was nervous enough about her first day of school and couldn't deal with the knowledge that he was worried sick about her.

As soon as the police cruiser left the parking lot El wished she had just stayed with him. The number of people and cars around her was overwhelming. She was surrounded by excited chatter, the yelling of parents and the sound of a long row of arriving and leaving school buses.

What did she think? Was she really ready for this? A girl who spends nearly all her life in quiet and dark solitude? Suddenly she was almost run over by a car and she had to jump back as the driver made a risky turn into the parking lot Hopper had just lead. The passenger door of the car swung open and El could hear loud rock music blaring from the inside.

She was about to panic when she recognized the girl that just left the car as Max. The redhead had a furious expression on her face as she stomped away from the car as fast as she could. At the same time, the driver's side opened and a boy with blonde hair that looked a little

bit too old for a High School student left the car.

"Don't forget to be here at five nag or else you can walk home." Max just flipped him off without turning around again and the boy answered the gesture with a cruel laugh. El witnessed the scene helplessly. She didn't know who the boy was or if she was required to interject and help Max. Her hands hurt as she clawed them into her backpack.

Just as Max was about to rush past her without noticing her El came back to her senses and called the name of the other girl shyly to stop her. Max turned around and her gaze was still so furious that El instinctively prepared to protect herself if necessary. But as she recognized who had called her Max's face went soft and she went back to greet her new friend.

"El! What are you doing here? I thought we agreed to meet the boys at the bike stand? I'm sure your lover will be beside himself by now." Max chuckled nervously but El recognized that she was just trying to gloss over what had just happened. El might not have a lot of experience with social norms but her gut told her that now wasn't the right time to confront the other girl. Therefore she gave her a helpless smile. "Yes sorry. I got a little bit overwhelmed."

Max chuckled again and this time it seemed a lot more heartfelt. Without another word she came over to her and linked her arm with Elvens to pull her forward.

"There you are. Oh my god I was so scared Hopper changed his mind or you got run over by a bus or something." Mike exclaimed as the two girls neared the group of waiting boys. His dark hair was already ruffled like if he had moved his hands through it several times.

The other boys just rolled their eyes. "We were just seconds away from sedating him before he went into a heart attack." Lukas mocked his friend and the others laughed. As they reached the group Max let go of her arm and went to greet the others while El came to stand directly in front of him.

She noticed how his face flushed a little as he toyed with his hands nervously. "Hi". He finally exclaimed in a soft voice and El gave him a

wide smile. "For haven's sake please just hug her. I don't want to miss Math for this." Lukas interrupted again as he moved between them and pulled El into a quick hug. Dustin followed suit with a snicker and Will just waved at her before the three boys together with Max moved into the tide of students about to enter the school.

Mike cleared his throat awkwardly before he opened his arms to her and El moved without hesitation. Being in his familiar embrace was the first feeling of safety she experienced since Hopper left.

"Come on I get you to the office." He said in a soft voice and El nodded grabbing his hand on instinct. Mike ogled their joined hands in confusion but then he just nodded to himself and pulled her forward.

"So Miss Hopper. Here is your schedule and this is a list of extracurricular activities. I don't know what you are interested in but Hawkins High School has a great offer of sport and art programs so I'm sure you will find something."

The nice old lady handed her a few pieces of paper and El thanked her with a soft smile before she moved to leave the room. Mike, who has been waiting outside the room, instantly grabbed the paper from her to check it.

"Oh damn. All we have together is English and P.E." he cursed and El felt worried up on his comment. As he looked up and noticed her discomfort Mike was quick to send her a reassuring smile. "Don't worry. I think you are going to share some classes with Will and Max. It's just that Lukas, Dustin and I are taking a lot of advanced since classes and we will still see each other every lunch break."

El tried her best to be positive but she could feel the nervous knot forming in her belly as she thought about having to face school without Mike by her side.

"Come on I lead you to your first class," Mike exclaimed as he grabbed her hand again this time without hesitation. As they moved through the long and crowded floors that seemed uncomfortably familiar to her El couldn't help but get a little closer to him. Way too soon they reached the room for her first course of the day that would

be Biology.

"Okay, my lady here we are." He joked but as he saw her nervous expression his face fell quickly. "Don't worry El. I will be here to pick you up as soon as the bell rings and then we will have P.E. together okay?". She tried to give him a brave smile because she couldn't use jet another man in her life worrying about her. Mike pressed her hand for the last time before he turned and hurried away. El looked after him until he was swallowed by the mass of students. She took a deep breath and entered her class.

"Class I want you to say hello to Jane Hopper. She is new in Hawkins and this is her first day in High School since she was homeschooled in the past. I trust you to help her if she needs it. Jane dear why don't you sit down in the back next to Andrew?" Mrs. McDoogle asked her with a nice smile while she actively ignored Max waving for El to sit next to her on the left of the room.

El nodded and moved to her assigned spot while she gave Max an apologetic smile. The table was at the end of the room next to a window. That relieved El because she wouldn't feel too claustrophobic in this spot. Next to her in the middle row sat a boy with bright blue eyes that mustered her curiously. His hair was dark blonde and hung into his forehead in uneven strands and beneath them, she could see the reflection of a small golden earring in his left ear. He wore torn jeans and a checkered shirt similar to those Hopper prefers to wear when he wasn't in uniform. As she came closer she could make out a faint smell of cigarettes. Also, something that reminded her of her new dad.

She gave him a small nod before she quickly sat down hopeful to defuse all the uncomfortable attention that lay at her. As soon as she had pulled out her freshly purchased book and her pencils Mrs. McDoogle started with her class.

El soon found the subject quite interesting and Mrs. McDoogle was a nice lady so she allowed herself to relax a little as she took notes. After a while, she noticed a strange tingling in the back of her neck and as she looked to the side she could see the guy still staring at her. He wasn't smiling or mocking her. His face seemed blank but it looked like he was trying to burn a hole in her. His behavior made

her feel uncomfortable so she slightly turned away from him trying her best to ignore it.

As the bell announced the end of the lesson El had to contain herself not to jump. Thankfully nobody noticed her little slip as everyone in the room started to pack their belongings. She could see Max fighting her way against the stream to get to her.

As she leaned down to grab her backpack she could feel a soft touch on her wrist that sends a chill up her spine as a quiet voice whispered in her ear: "Nice to meet you, Shirley Temple."

7. A friend

Hello to everyone who is still reading that and a special hello to iAmCC for being the only one who still writes comments! I appreciate that very much I hope you all will like that chapter and please tell me if you have any suggestions.

Chapter 8: a friend

El's eyes grew wide as she watched him with a mixture of surprise but also a little fear. "You know Kali?" she whispered back and Andrew just shrugged signaling her that he wasn't planning on revealing anything else.

His next choice was Will and with that their conversation was effectively cut as the small boy came to stand next to El giving her a reassuring look as he believed to save her from the distress to be separated from her friends.

Just now El noticed that Will seemed to be the only one on her team as all the others ended up with a not so happy Charity. She caught Mike's gaze and noticed that his happy smile was now replaced by a deep frown. His obvious discomfort made her feel uneasy but her heart was beating fast with the need to find the connection between Andrew and her sister.

Beside Hopper, she hadn't told anyone about her adventures in Chicago. While she didn't totally understand the reasons behind that the memory about what happened there left her ashamed and disgusted at herself. Clearly, something she didn't want her friends exposed to. Still, when she thought about Kali there was also a deep sadness about the sister she could have had and it hurt her to remember the disappointment in the older girls face as she let her down.

After she made her decision El was sure that Kali wouldn't want to see her ever again so while she feared what the appearance of Andrew might signify deep down in her deepest hidden mind it also provoked a little bit of hope.

As the teams moved forward to stand within a big rectangle on the floor she tried her best to concentrate while Will gave her a quick summary of the game they were about to play. Thankfully the rules seemed really basic compared to the games the boy's usually liked to play.

Suddenly the coach made a loud noise with a little metal subject that hung around his neck that made her jump in surprise and a quick side glance to Will helped her to figure out that she was supposed to move into the rectangle and grab a ball.

Then the coach made the same loud noise as a signal for them to start playing and in an instant El almost forgot what was bothering her as she just enjoyed the challenge. It took only a few minutes for her to get into the game. Her small build and agility made her dodge most of the balls that got thrown in her direction with ease. She almost danced around the field trying to avoid getting hit. Finally, she was able to catch one of the balls and as the opportunity arise she threw it back as hard as she could hitting Lucas in the chest. The boy gave a loud shriek of surprise and stared at her with an open mouth. His expression made El laugh and she signaled with her raised hands that she didn't mean to hurt him. Lucas closed his mouth after a second and as he left the field to stand at the side he gave Mike, who was already standing on the outline with his arms crossed in front of his chest and a sour look on his face, an accusing look.

Her focus on Mike caused her to almost miss a Ball that was thrown at her with a triumphant shout from Max. Her face was almost as red as her hair by now and her eyes gleamed brightly with joy, ambition and competitive spirit. El could feel a rush of adrenaline run through her body as she tried to get her hands on another ball when it suddenly happened. A tall boy from the enemy team threw a ball at Andrew as he was just about to lean forward and it hit him in the face with full force. A girl screamed in shock as an ugly cracking sound could be heard and blood started to rush out as the tall boy fell to his knees.

The game was stopped and Mr. Kandal rushed to his side trying to get a look at his face. "Alright, Mr. Taylor I think that is it for you. You need to see the nurse quick and probably a visit to the E.R. would be in order. Can someone please get him there?" he asked while he

turned around to the crowd of shell-shocked Teenagers around him and before she knew what got into her El could feel her hand shoot into the air.

She could feel the suspicious looks on her back like hot needles as she guided the much taller boy out of the gym and back into the direction of the school's main building. Unfortunately, her spontaneous plan had overseen that she didn't even know where the school nurse had her office but thankfully Andrew seemed collected enough to take the lead. She worried her lips as she thought about how to ask him what was burning on her tongue but even she noticed that this wasn't the best time for an interrogation.

A few minutes later they were seated in an uncomfortably white room where they waited for the nurse who went to the school's office to call for an ambulance since it seemed like Andrew's nose was broken.

The situation reminded El of Mike's broken arm and she had to shake herself to suppress the image of his stony face as she volunteered to guide a boy she knew for less than a day to the infirmary. She would have to deal with him later. Now she needed some information so she could decide if she had to inform Hopper.

"You know if you wanted to be alone with me you could have just asked." Andrew broke through her thoughts in a nasal voice that lacked his usual coolness. El ignored his comment as she decided that this would be her only chance to talk to him before the nurse would be back.

"How do you know Kali? Are you one of the bad man?" she asked him with a shaky voice and the obvious fear in her voice made him melt. Andrew fixated her for a moment which wasn't easy since he was still pressing a bloody handkerchief to his now swollen nose. Just as El thought that he would probably not give her an answer he finally spoke: "My brother is a part of her gang. I think you know him. His name is Axel." Andrew said in a soft voice as El's eyes roamed his face to look for a resemblance to the rude older boy with the spiky hair.

"After our parents died Kali took us both in and we lived with her for

a while. Helping her to ... you know, do her thing." He overly intonated the last words and El could feel a chill run down her spine as she remembered what exactly Kali's 'thing' was. I really liked it there and I hoped it would go on like that forever but one day Axel told me that our aunt had tried to contact him. We didn't know her well because she is a Hippie you know. Used to live in a commune somewhere in the mountains." He snickered a little at that but El said nothing since she didn't know what a Hippie was but didn't want to interrupt his story.

"Well anyway, she told him that she now has a house in Hawkins and that she would like to take us in as long as I would need to go to school. First I thought he was joking but Axel's face grew very serious. He told me that the life they were living wasn't right for me and that I should at least stay with our aunt until I finish school. Man, I was so mad at him I almost flipped. But finally Kali came to me and she told me her story... your story" he sends her a careful look at that "and how much she would have wished to have the chance to live a normal life. And that is how I ended up in this dullsville."

El was quiet for a moment as she could feel the beating of her heart slow down as she processed that Andrew wasn't a harm to her or her family. After a minute she asked: "How do you know me?"

The boy tried to give her a grin but the bloodstain that graced his front teeth made it look like a scene from one of the horror movies Dustin made them look sometimes.

"I still go and visit the gang sometimes and the last time they Dottie and the others wouldn't shut up about how Kali has a sister from the lap in Indiana that looked like a character of our little farm. So after what I had heard about you and saw your reaction as I called you by the nickname Axel gave you it wasn't difficult to figure out who you are."

El nodded in understanding. They fell silent again before she dared to ask "Is Kali mad at me?". Andrew turned a little to get a better look at her. His eyebrows were scrunched together in confusion. "What? No, I don't think so. She didn't talk that much about you but I would say deep down she hopes that you will have more luck than her and have

the chance for a normal life. You know what? Now she is even set to search for the others."

El's eyes widened in surprise. "Others?" she asked him and Andrew nodded enthusiastically but winced as he quickly remembered his broken nose. "While you haven't been to school for a while I think you should have noticed that there are a few numbers missing between 8 and 11." He answered as he pointed on the tattoo on her wrist that was currently covered by a colorful wristband Nancy had made for her.

The thought hit her like a lightning. How could she have missed that? Of course, there must be others. She had never seen another child in her time at the lab or overheard something about that but she knew that there must be other labs. How many people are out there with powers like hers?

Suddenly the door opened and El shrieked as her head whipped to the side. It was the young nurse that greeted them with a soft smile. "Sorry honey I didn't want to startle you. Andrew the transport will be here any second. I'm going to get you outside to wait for them."

Andrew nodded and collected his things. As he stood El stood up as well and they shared a small smile. "See you around Jane. Take care." He said and El was quick to wish him a quick recovery before they turned the corner and left her behind.